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## Synopses of Important Articles.

**THE DIFFICULT WORDS OF CHRIST; I. THE CHILDREN AT PLAY, MATT. XI. 16-19.** By Rev. JAS. STALKER, D.D., in *The Expositor* Jan. 1893.

The passage is a criticism passed by Christ upon the generation to which he belonged, in respect to their treatment of John the Baptist and himself. Characteristically he has embodied his rebuke in a figure of speech, and has drawn from child life. A game is described in which children imitated first a marriage, one piping and the others dancing about him; then a funeral, one wailing, the others following mourning. Construing Christ's figure, who are represented by the children who complain to their companions? There are two views: (1) that they are Jesus and John the Baptist; (2) that they are the Jews in general. The latter view comes from a too literal adjustment of the parallels; the phrase "it is like" is simply a link by which the thing to be illustrated is loosely connected with the illustration, which is then developed as a picture with perfect freedom. Further, were not John and Jesus the innovators, who proposed the new departures, but could not get their contemporaries to join? Is it historical to say that fickleness and an excessive disposition to change were the characteristics of the age of Jesus? An additional argument against the second view, sentimental indeed but not therefore without weight, is that it takes all the sunshine out of the picture of child life which the illustration presents, and would Jesus have been likely to do that? By the first view nothing is lost, because all that is really brought out by the second is included; and there is everything to gain.

The discussion is rather an exegetical than a practical one, as the general meaning and point of the parable are the same under any explanation. It is a little surprising that Dr. Stalker (with Godet) has gone back to the old interpretation of the passage, as against many recent commentators (Lange, Meyer, Weiss, Holtzmann, Bruce, Schaff, *et al.*) His principal reason for doing so is to avoid certain alleged violence done the history by the more recent view, which he cites in order to refute. But the difficulty is a conjectural and not a real one. Excessive pressure is brought to bear upon the figure to make it yield historic detail. The error of literalism which Dr. Stalker decries in his first argument characterizes his second. The figure of the parable introduces us to children at play in the streets with their customary youthful games of mimicry. Some wish to have a mock marriage, but their fellows refuse to join in their gayety; then they propose a mock funeral, but still they will not respond. In fact, they are childish, insincere and unreasonable. And just so, says Jesus, are the men of this generation. Nothing which is genuinely religious will suit them, because they do not wish to be suited. If Jesus and John have to be identified either with the children who propose the games or with those who refuse to play, the manner

of introducing the comparison (see especially Luke vii. 31-35) and the natural parallelism of figure and explanation demand the latter; *i. e.*, the Jews called upon John to be less somber and severe, but he would not; they called upon Christ to be less cheerful and social, but neither would he respond. But it is neither necessary nor desirable to understand that Jesus identified himself and John with either group of children. To do so involves a manifest lack of dignity. Christ is administering a rebuke to the Jews of his time for rejecting their truest religious leaders. He employs this illustration to disclose the underlying cause and spirit of their opposition, which were their childishness, insincerity and unreasonableness. Any attempt to draw out detailed similarities between figure and explanation is unwise because involving difficulty and violence. Besides, such a proceeding is out of harmony with the best principles of exegesis as applied to parabolic interpretation.

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ST. PAUL AND INSPIRATION. By Prof. GEORGE T. PURVES, D.D., in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, January, 1893.

The influence of Paul's teachings is so great that it may truly be said that our apprehension of Christianity depends upon our apprehension of Paul.

I. In considering the testimony which Paul gave to his consciousness of apostolic office we have, first, a summary of his teachings respecting "his gospel;" this was not elaborated by his own mind, but received through direct revelation of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, his mind was the subject of special illumination by the Holy Spirit, so that he was enabled to apprehend this objective revelation, and to regard himself as a vehicle for the utterance of God's thought; "God doth beseech you by us," "Christ speaketh in me," etc. Therefore he claims absolute authority over the faith and conduct of Christians, and, identifying "his gospel" with "the word of the Lord," he warns against any one who teaches otherwise, even though he were an angel from heaven. He attached the same authority to his letters as to his oral teaching, and to the verbal form in which his truth was expressed no less than to the truth itself; cf. 2 Thess. 2.15; 1 Cor. 2.13. Though his rhetoric, argument and style were brought to his mind by the Holy Spirit, yet there was never a more living writer than Paul, whose marked self-consciousness, intense personality, and limitations as well, stamp themselves on all his writings.

II. Setting aside at once the objections brought by naturalism, these claims are justified (a) by the fact that they were freely admitted by the other apostles, and (b) by the fact that "his gospel" is a legitimate unfolding of ideas already announced in the teachings of Jesus; it stands in such relation to that of the other apostolic writers as to be an integral and necessary part of the apostolic teaching as a whole, and a legitimate unfolding of the teachings of the Old Testament.

III. In view of the above facts, what was Paul's doctrine about the Scripture? Did he attach the same conception of authority and inspiration to it that he attached to his own teachings, whether oral or written? (a) His

descriptions of the Old Testament indicate that he regarded it as God's gift to the church of all time, that it was "inspired by God," and "*written* for our admonition." (b) Paul's actual use of Scripture shows that he regarded "his gospel" as the very substance of the law and the prophets. He treats the Biblical narrative—so far at least as its leading features are concerned—as true, and as fundamental to his view of God's government of the world and of the method of man's salvation. He supports his argument by appeal to the precise words used by the sacred writers; but since he does not derive his doctrine from the Scriptures, but from direct revelation of Jesus Christ, he is not confined to exact quotation. His exegetical method was determined by his practical purpose, so that he could either show his reverence for the letter of Scripture, or his disregard for it, as occasion required.

In the light of this study we may grasp the meaning of the word *theopneustos*—"breathed into by God"—applied by him to the Scriptures. He evidently meant that, as writings, they were so composed under God's particular direction that both in substance and in form they were the special utterance of His mind and will. The Divine Spirit dwelt in them, and breathed through them.

The authority which Paul claims for his own writings, and which he attributes to the Old Testament, he accords to the writings of other apostles and inspired men which were accepted by the church as a part of Scripture.

IV. A Christian scholar must, therefore, approach the study of the Bible with peculiar reverence, not in the same mental attitude in which he approaches other literature, not blindly nor unintelligently, but with quickened intellectual and moral power, so that he may understand it as a living thing, an organism. Paul nowhere describes the *method* by which the Divine Spirit operates in himself, or in the prophets, to produce the Scriptures. He testifies to the fact and its consequences.

The account which the Bible gives of itself provides the strongest incentive to textual criticism, the reproduction as nearly as possible of the original; it will stimulate to the most exact and painstaking exegesis; it should lead to an apprehension of the Bible as a whole. The student should not be surprised to find that elements historical, verbal, or doctrinal, which enter into the structure of the Bible, had a previous existence of their own (for example in the synoptic gospels); but only as incorporated in the Scriptures can such materials be affirmed to be inspired.

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The above admirable inductive study, covering twenty-four pages, makes it clear that Paul claimed for himself, and for the other Biblical writers, a divine authority in a very high and altogether peculiar sense. But while asserting the *fact*, it is equally clear that neither he nor they give the data for constructing an adequate *theory* of inspiration. Dr. Purves' investigation proves that a careful statement of the Bible's testimony respecting its own inspiration nowise conflicts with the sober results of a most rigid higher criticism of either the Old Testament or the New. P. A. N.

PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY ; I. THE SOURCES. By REV. PROF. A. B. BRUCE, D.D., in *The Expositor*, January, 1893.

To make ourselves acquainted with the Pauline type of Christianity or *Paulinism*, a careful study of the four letters to the Galatian, Corinthian and Roman churches is all that is necessary. This limitation is justified by the fact that these epistles are everywhere recognized as genuine. Moreover, these epistles have the advantage of being controversial, for in a great crisis the thoughts of men are clear, defining themselves with the utmost sharpness and energy against those of their opponents. The issue is clear and vital, viz., the nature and destination of Christianity. In the group known as the *prison* epistles the special characteristic is the prominence given to Christology. The other groups, containing the epistles to the Thessalonians and the pastoral letters, yield no distinctive contribution to Paulinism. Since the first of these four groups is separated from the last by some sixteen years, the question may be asked with propriety, Was there any growth in Paul's mind in relation to Christianity, or must we conceive of his system of Christian thought as the same at all stages of his history, poured out at the first gush so to speak, and settling thereafter into an unchangeable, rigid form? There is no *a priori* objection to the hypothesis of development. But what is the fact in respect to Paul? The epistles to the Thessalonians, with the discourses in Acts, have been supposed to be the sources of a *Primitive Paulinism*. That these epistles represent a kind of rudimentary gospel is beyond doubt. But it by no means follows that that rudimentary gospel represents all that Paul then knew. That this was not the case is clearly seen from the fact that the Thessalonian epistles were written at least a year or two after the council at Jerusalem, where Paul appeared as the champion of gentile liberties. The encounter with Peter at Antioch had also taken place, and Paul's utterance at that time, Gal. ii. 14-21, is not a supposed primitive Paulinism, but the fully formulated Paulinism of the controversial letters. There is, then, every reason to believe that his characteristic ideas had taken form before he wrote the Thessalonian epistles. The phenomena encountered in those epistles are perhaps best explained by supposing that they show us the form in which Paul judged it fitting to present the gospel to nascent Christian communities when he had in view merely their immediate religious needs and capacities. Viewed from this point these epistles are a kind of Christian Primer, in which the frequent occurrence of such phrases as "ye remember," "ye know," indicates that the writer wishes to impress upon his readers the importance of former instruction. The elements of Christian truth contained in this Primer may be summarized as follows. (1) The word commonly used by Paul to denote the message of salvation is the Gospel, more definitely the *Gospel of God*. (2) The substance of this message is escape from "the wrath to come." Salvation is regarded chiefly from the *eschatological* point of view. (3) The great object of Christian trust appears,

not so much as Jesus the crucified, but rather as Jesus exalted into heaven, and about to come thence again for the destruction of sinners and the salvation of believers. Once only is Christ's death referred to as a means of salvation, I Thess. v. 10, and that in the most general terms. It indicates, at least, that Paul was not accustomed in his mission-addresses to enter with much fullness or exactness of statement into the doctrine of redemption by Christ's death. This also corresponds with the reports of his mission-addresses in the book of Acts. The points chiefly insisted on are Christ's death for sin and his resurrection, the former being rather implied than expressed, cf. Acts xiii. 38-39. (4) In the passage just referred to the word "justified" occurs, but it is not found in the Thessalonian epistles. The same idea in *essence* is presented in the words "faith" and "grace." (5) Jesus is called *the Son of God* and *the Lord*. (6) Mention is also made of the Holy Spirit, and in the specifically Pauline sense of the *Sanctifier*. While salvation is regarded from the eschatological point of view, present sanctification is strongly insisted on as a preparation for the future salvation. The writer's interest in real Christian goodness is intense and unmistakable; and it inspires us with confidence that whatever Paulinism may mean, it will never be found to imply indifference to ethical ideals and their embodiment in right conduct.

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This article is the first of a series in which Professor Bruce discusses Paul's Conception of Christianity. The first article, on The Sources, will be followed by an attempt to form as definite conception as possible of the nature and import of Paul's religious experience, and this by a rapid survey of the four great epistles to the Galatian, Corinthian and Roman churches. The series promises to be one of exceptional interest and value.